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***Lost Child – Sayon’s Journey* Explores the Cambodian Genocide**

**Through the Eyes of a Former Child Soldier**

NEW YORK – *Lost Child – Sayon’s Journey*, a moving and provocative new documentary from The Gardner Documentary Group, explores the Cambodian genocide and its lasting impact through the eyes of a former Khmer Rouge child soldier.

Narrating in his own voice, Sayon Soeun confronts his childhood experiences during Cambodia’s darkest hour; revealing for the first time what he witnessed and struggled with as he came of age.

Soeun was abducted at the age of six, exploited by the Khmer Rouge; his family life and education stolen. His recovery and redemption from unimaginable evil entails his transition from an orphanage in a refugee camp to his adoption by a loving American family in Connecticut.

This powerful and compelling work, winner of a [Cine Golden Eagle Award](http://www.cine.org/spring-2013-cine-golden-eagle-award-recipients/independent-division/) in the independent documentary feature category, follows Soeun’s first journey back to Cambodia to heal himself by finding the family that had lost but never forgotten him, and forgiving himself for his complicity as a Khmer Rouge child soldier.

"But I don't think I'll ever be able to forget what I learned as a child,” Soeun said. “They taught us that we didn't have a family, that our parents and siblings are now my enemy."

Now in his 40s, Soeun directs a charity called Light of Cambodian Children in Lowell, Mass., where he lives with his wife and child. After more than 35 years, he recently made contact with brothers and a sister he assumed were dead. The film builds to a suspenseful conclusion as Soeun receives the results of DNA tests that will confirm or refute his relationship to the people he meets in Cambodia, who are certain he is their brother.

Director and co-producer Janet Gardner decided to tell Soeun’s “powerful and compelling story” after meeting him because he helped her learn “how children can be exploited in war, and I admired his ability to redeem himself from being a witness to genocide,” she told the *Lowell Sun* in Lowell, Mass., where the film has been screened twice.

*Lost Child* was co-produced by Sopheap Theam, Soeun’s sister-in-law and a native of Cambodia, whose family fled the country when she was an infant. In the film, she accompanies Soeun on his first trip back to the country.

Cinematographer Kevin Cloutier is a four-time Emmy Award winner. He also has been honored for his work on CBS’ 60 Minutes and Bill Moyers Journal. He has been collaborating with The Gardner Documentary Group since 1993.

*Lost Child* was selected for screening at the Boston Asian American Film Festival in October 2013 and the Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival in November 2013, where it received the Audience Choice Award. The film had its New York premiere in February 2014 at Cooper Union.

*Lost Child* is The Gardner Documentary Group's second film on the Cambodian genocide. *Dancing Through Death*, about the classical dancers who survived the Khmer Rouge regime, was broadcast on PBS stations in 2007 and won a CINE Golden Eagle Award.

Janet Gardner founded The Gardner Group, Inc., in 1990 to direct and produce documentaries that emphasize the human experience in the context of historic events. Film credits include the NEH -funded *Mechanic to Millionaire: The Peter Cooper* Story which won a CINE Golden Eagle in 2010; *Precious Cargo* produced in association with ITVS (PBS/ National Geographic Channels International, 2001); *Siberian Dream*, 2004; *Dancing Through Death* (PBS/ STARTV, 1999); and Emmy-nominated *A World Beneath the War* (PBS/ Discovery Channels International, 1997).

Her documentaries have received national and international awards from the International Documentary Association, National Education Media Network, CINE, Casey Journalism Center and Society of Professional Journalists.

Gardner began her career as a field producer, film editor and news writer for NBC News and WNBC-TV, WRC-TV (Washington, D.C.) and CBS News. As a print journalist, she was a feature writer for *The* (Cleveland) *Plain Dealer,* and contributed to *The New York Times (New Jersey correspondent), Philadelphia Inquirer,* and *Boston Globe.* Gardner is an alumna of New York University's Graduate Institute of Film and Television (now Tisch School of the Arts) and Cooper Union.

For further information about the documentary, visit [lostchildthefilm.org](http://lostchildthefilm.org). The website was made possible by a grant from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, a state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. For more information on The Gardner Documentary Group, visit [gardnerdocgroup.com](http://gardnerdocgroup.com) or call 212-279-5611.

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